

A SABINE'S GULL IN COAHUILA: FIRST RECORD FROM THE INTERIOR OF MÉXICO

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In the northern interior state of Coahuila, Mexico, over 400 avian species have been recorded, 46% of which are migrant (Garza de León 2003). Because of its geographic position and topography the area serves as a migration corridor for species from eastern, central, and western North America. These geographic conditions enhance the region's importance as an area for wintering and transient birds (Garza de León 1987, Garza de León et al. unpubl. data), despite its aridity. Here we report an occurrence of Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*) in the state of Coahuila.

Sabine's Gull is a high-latitude holarctic breeder that winters mainly in the Humboldt Current off western South America and the Benguela Current off southwestern Africa (Olsen and Larsson 2003). In Mexico it is a common migrant and irregular winter visitor off the Pacific Coast (Howell and Webb 1995, Howell and Dunn in press) with two records (in November and February) from the Yucatan Peninsula (Howell and Prairie 1989, Howell et al. 2001); there are no previous records from the interior of Mexico. In the interior of the United States and Canada, Sabine's Gulls are rare to casual migrants in fall and are, overall, more numerous in the West. The species is casual at best in these interior regions in spring, with records from late April to early June, again mainly in the West (Howell and Dunn in press).

During a field trip on 1 April 2006 to a reservoir known as Presa El Tullillo in southern Coahuila (25° 40' N, 101° 25' W, 960 m above sea level) we observed a mixed-species group of Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*; 22 individuals) and Laughing Gulls (*L. atricilla*; 4 individuals) feeding together. We discovered the Sabine's Gull within this group by noting a smaller individual that stood apart from the rest of the gulls.

We collected the specimen and deposited it with the ornithological collection of the Museo de las Aves de México in Saltillo, Coahuila, México. The specimen (MUSAVE 2545) had no body fat or molt; we could not determine its sex. The bird had the plumage and bare parts of a typical breeding Sabine's Gull: a gray hood with black lower border, white neck and underparts, the striking wing pattern, and gray mantle and white tail. Its black bill was tipped with yellow, and the legs and feet were black.

There are other unusual records of seabirds in southern Coahuila, particularly at El Tullillo, where both the Parasitic (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) and Pomarine (*S. pomarinus*) jaegers have been recorded (Garza de León 1987). The reservoir, surrounded by aquatic and riparian vegetation, clearly acts as an oasis within the region's arid scrub lands.

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